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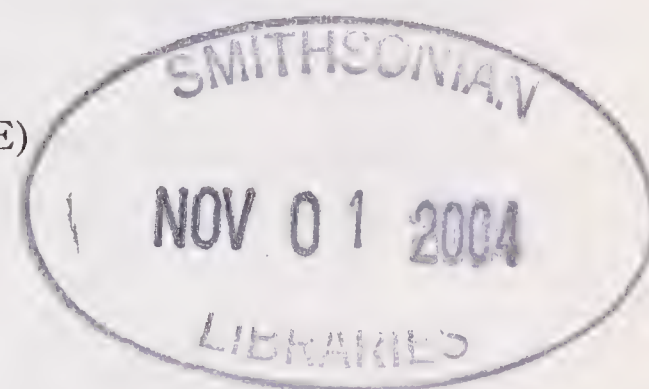
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THE MALE OF *ROPALOTERES SACCHII* CASSOLA, 1978, FROM ETHIOPIA

(COLEOPTERA, CICINDELIDAE)



INTRODUCTION

The tiger beetle fauna of Ethiopia was first reviewed by CASSOLA (1978), and more recently by WERNER (1993, 1994). Further data were later provided by WERNER (1996, 1997, 1999), WERNER & CASSOLA (2000), WERNER & OESTERLE (2000) and CASSOLA & WERNER (2003). Fifty-six species, with sixty-five subspecies, respectively 15 and 25 of which (26.7% and 38.4%) are endemic of the country, are known so far to occur in Ethiopia (PEARSON & CASSOLA 1992; CASSOLA & PEARSON 2000). Their full list has recently been provided by WERNER & CASSOLA (2000).

In particular, CASSOLA described in 1978 an Ethiopian endemic, *Ropaloteres sacchii*, based on a single female specimen – just puzzlingly labeled “dai Badditù a Dimé, IV-VII”, thus probably coming from present-day Sidamo or Gemu Gofa provinces – collected during the famous expedition to the River Omo carried on in 1896 by the Italian explorer, Captain Vittorio BOTTEGO, who died during a fight in the course of the expedition (VANNUTELLI & CITERNI 1929; LAVAGETTO

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1934). The species, although based on a single female specimen only, appeared to be quite distinctive, but its placement in the genus *Ropaloteres* Guérin-M., 1849, was just tentative, due to the lack of a male specimen (CASSOLA 1978). A colour photograph of the holotype was recently published by the second author (WERNER 2000, fig. 271). Moreover, WERNER tried hard during several expeditions in the possible region of this species to find additional material and particularly the then unknown male, but without any success (WERNER 1993).

Over the years and after six more expeditions in Ethiopia, when the attention to *R. sacchii* was nearly lost, the species was found at last. In fact, on the occasion of a recent trip to Ethiopia, the second author had the fine opportunity of meeting and collecting one further specimen, this time a male, thus finally providing a first precise finding locality and first hand information about the species' habitat, and allowing us to describe the male here below.

***Ropaloteres sacchii* Cassola, 1978**
(figs. 1 a-c, 2)

Material: Sidamo Province, near Agere Maryam, 11-12.V.2002, Werner & Sudre leg., 1 ♂, in second author's collection.

Description of the male. Colour and general characters as those of female. Head completely glabrous, black, with some slight bluish-violet reflections on clypeus, genae and the four basal antennomeres. Vertex excavated, roughly sculptured, with two deep impressions between the eyes; glabrous, just one sensorial seta near the front edge of each eye. Labrum approximately two times wider than long, 6-haired, 5-dentate, testaceous, blackened in front middle edge. Mandibles testaceous, apical and inner teeth shiny black. Maxillary palpi fully black, labial palpi testaceous with the last joint black. Fourth antennal segment without a penicillum. Pronotum subsquare, glabrous, roughly sculptured, with strong, irregular, somewhat cerebriform striae; transverse grooves deeply marked, postero-lateral tubercles small. Elytra dull black, rather flattened above, with a strong, sharp, sutural spine; elytral surface densely punctured, with just a few narrow, longitudinal, irregular, impunctate, velvety areoles in between. Underside metallic black with bluish-violet reflections, partially covered with white semi-erect pubescence on lower episterna

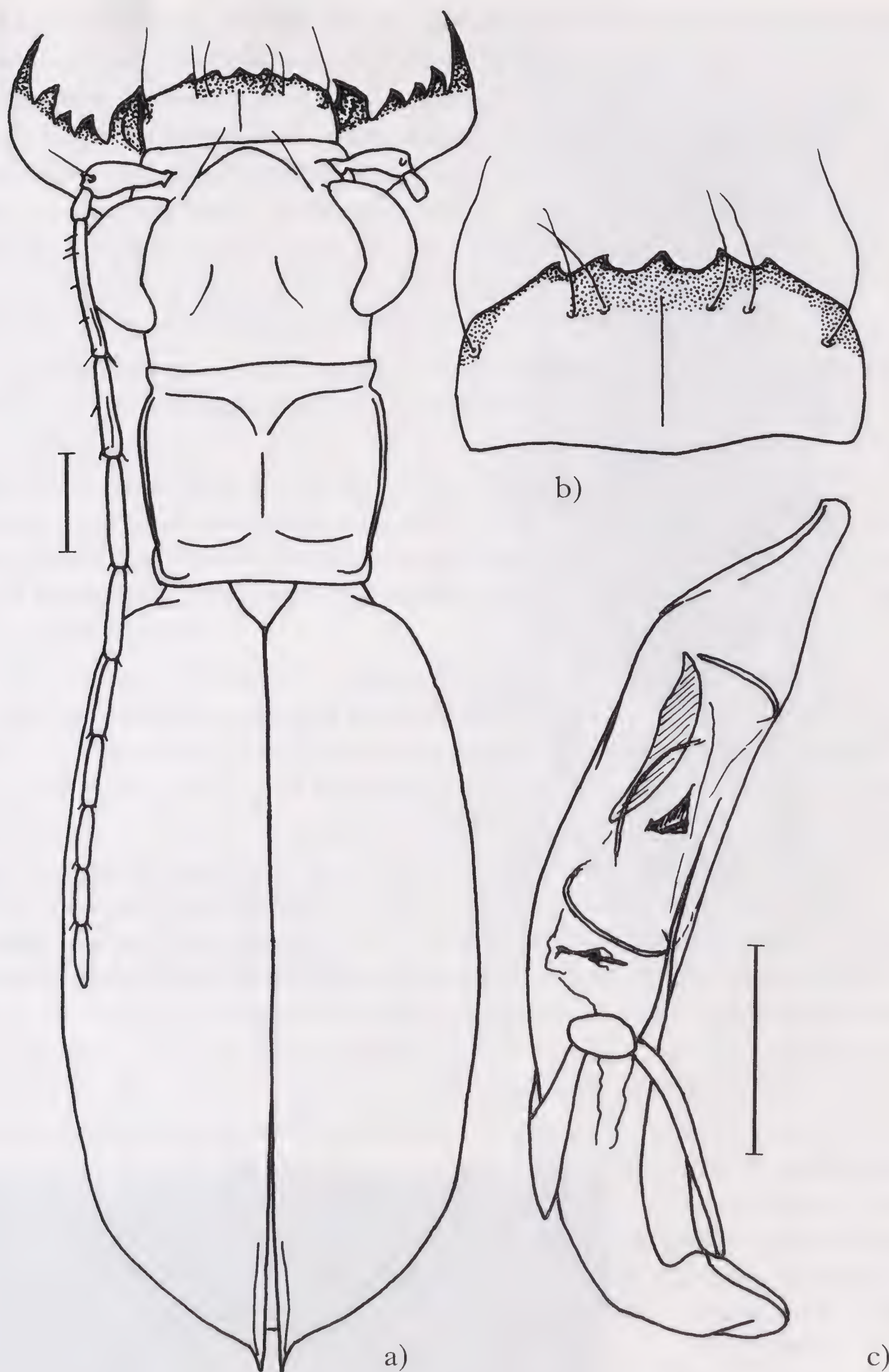


Fig. 1: *Ropaloteres sacchii* Cassola, 1978: male specimen from the environs of Agere Maryam, Sidamo Province, Ethiopia: a) habitus, b) labrum, c) aedeagus and inner sac. Scale-lines: 1 mm.



Fig. 2: *Ropaloteres sacchii* Cassola, 1978, male specimen from the environs of Agere Maryam, Sidamo Province, Ethiopia.

Fig. 3: Habitat of *Ropaloteres sacchii* Cassola, 1978, in the environs of Agere Maryam, Sidamo Province, Ethiopia.



and mesepisterna, as well as on mesepimera, metepisterna, sides of sterna, coxae, and sides of abdominal sternites; a pair of longer sensorial setae on each side of the middle of 4th and 5th abdominal sternites. Legs metallic black, with a few rows of white spiniform setae on femora and tibiae; apical spurs of tibiae and tarsi, as well as tarsal claws, rufescent dark. Aedeagus bulky, tapered, with a short, blunt, slightly hooked apex; inner sac of aedeagus of the "mantle-type" ("sac à manteau"), typical of the genus *Ropaloteres* (RIVALIER 1957). Length: 12.6 mm (without labrum).

Comparison of the recently collected male specimen with the single female holotype has fully confirmed their conspecificity. However, the original description has to be partly improved, as the labial palpi of the holotype too have, unlike the maxillary palpi, their penultimate joint dark yellowish, instead of fully black; and, moreover, the elytral sculpture is not so oblique and deeply marked, and the subsutural foveae are not so obvious, as the given figure (CASSOLA 1978, fig. 11) would suggest.

Ecology. The habitat where *R. sacchii* was found in the environs of Agere Maryam is typical forested Ethiopian highland with red soil (fig. 3). The country is highly populated and intensively cultivated, but with many patches of both primary and secondary forest, and also grasslands for the many goats and cattle. Farmers mainly grow maize, coffee, vegetables, and bananas. Because of the heavy rains, erosion often provides open areas representing suitable habitat for tiger beetles. The male specimen of *R. sacchii* was captured at one of these spots, where it landed at a close distance in front of the second author when he was on his knees catching an extremely rare carabid species, *Graphipterus clarkei* BASILEWSKY, 1977, which also was previously known by the single holotype specimen only (BASILEWSKY 1977). After having captured *R. sacchii* the hunting was more concentrated to tiger beetles, but during the next several hours no more specimens of *R. sacchii* were unfortunately seen. Instead, specimens of two additional tiger beetle species were taken: *Prothymidia angusticollis* (Boheman) ssp. *abyssiniensis* Werner, 1993, and *Myriochile (Monelica) jordaniana* (W. Horn) ssp. *aethiopica* Cassola, 1978.

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ABSTRACT

Based on a recently collected specimen, the male of *Ropaloteres sacchii* Cassola, 1978, from Ethiopia, is described and illustrated. Such a species had been described based on a single female specimen only, that had been collected in 1896 by the famous expedition of Captain Vittorio Bottego to the River Omo in Ethiopia. Therefore, such a species has been rediscovered after over one century, a first precise locality is now known at last, and information on the habitat is briefly given.

RIASSUNTO

Sulla base di un esemplare di recentissima cattura, viene descritto ed illustrato il maschio di *Ropaloteres sacchii* Cassola, 1978, specie descritta sulla base di una sola femmina raccolta nel 1896 durante la famosa spedizione al Fiume Omo, in Etiopia, del Capitano Vittorio Bottego. La specie è stata dunque ritrovata dopo oltre un secolo, una sua prima località precisa può infine dirsi ora conosciuta e vengono fornite alcune brevi informazioni sull'habitat.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ein kürzlich erbeutetes Exemplar ermöglicht die Beschreibung und Abbildung des Männchens von *Ropaloteres sacchii* Cassola, 1978 aus Äthiopien. Diese Art wurde nach einem einzelnen Weibchen beschrieben, das im Jahre 1896, während der berühmten Expedition des Capitano Vittorio Bottego zum Omo Fluß in Äthiopien erbeutet wurde. Nach der Wiederentdeckung der Art nach über einem Jahrhundert werden hier erstmals ein genauer Fundort und Informationen über das Habitat präsentiert.